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PHILIPPINE THEATER 1972-79 : A CHRONICLE OF GROWTH UNDER CONSTRAINT

Bienvenido Lumbera

『フィリピン演劇1972-79年：その抑圧的状況下における発展』

ビエンヴェニド・ルンベラ

Its death had been proclaimed in the West since the 1960's, but theater was alive and well in the 1970's in the Philippines. As a matter of fact, moribund since movies and vaudeville took over the theater houses in Manila in the late 1920's, theater bounced back during this period youthful and vigorous and irresistibly thrusting forward to maturity.

Dedicated directors and performers had not been lacking even during the moribund years of Philippine theater. What it lost in Manila and other centers like Cebu and Iloilo was the sizeable audience that used to look to it for entertainment, enlightenment, and edification. When radio and television were added to the alternatives to theater initially provided by movies and vaudeville, theater proved itself unable to compete for audience patronage.

Political drama, which enjoyed popular support when the country was protesting against American rule in the early years of the century, succumbed to the harsh suppressive measures enforced by the U.S. colonial administration. The *sarsuwela* subsequently served the entertainment needs of the public, but after Severino Reyes, Hermogenes Ilagan, Patricio Mariano, Piux Kabahar, Mena Pecson Crisologo, Juan Crisostomo Soto and Valente Cristobal had given the genre its definitive shape, no *sarsuwelista* of note came along to suit the form to the changing taste and needs of a new generation of playgoers. Prose drama was emerging as a new form, but by the time it was ready to develop into an expressive vehicle for new playwrights, the audience had already been drawn away by the movies and vaudeville.

In the rural areas, traditional theater in the form of the *sinakulo*, *komedya*, and *sarsuwela* continued to have an audience whenever Lent or the town fiesta came once every

year. For the rest of the year, however, the same audience was fed on Tagalog movies that proved to be more entertaining and informative than any old play could be.

In the cities and towns, theater existed in the periphery of the entertainment industry, as "art" or "legitimate theater" catering to sparse audiences of academic people. Its offerings were in English, drawn from the repertory of world drama, principally, American, British, and European. This audience was largely unfamiliar with the past of Philippine theater, and consequently, it was disdainful when not totally ignorant of vernacular drama.

In the 1960's there was some kind of political dawning that had its impact on the cultural scene. Held suspect under the Cold War climate of the previous decade, nationalism was beginning to re-assert itself in college and university campuses as a delayed effect of the late Claro M. Recto's ideas as fiscalizer during the administration of Ramon Magsaysay. Early during the regime of Diosdado Macapagal, import control as a measure designed to shore up a wobbly national economy was lifted under pressure from U.S. economic interests in the Philippines. The immediate result was the devaluation of the peso which brought with it hard times for the masses.

The nationalist movement was well underway by the mid-60's, and the emergence of youth activism in colleges and universities served notice that a dynamic sector of the urban population was no longer content to wait for social change to come. From the campuses, young people fired by hopes that they could change society fanned out to communities to imbue the masses with their ideas for change.

In the exposure of the ills of society and the exposition of their ideas for a better society, nationalist youth organizations made effective use of theater. Troupes of performers were formed from among the rank and file members of the troupes themselves wrote, directed, and acted out the scripts. These performing groups did not find the absence of theaters, stage equipment, or even theater training a handicap — they bore the message of social change and this they took to the people where the people could be readily found — in the streets, in public plazas and community playgrounds, market places, wherever people naturally congregated.

From this exposure to dramatic performances which directly related to national problems and were addressed directly to the masses, low-income city folk and the homeless and unemployed in depressed areas in the city came away with an awareness of the uses of theater as an instrument of change. On the other hand, students and youths who participated in activist performances got a taste of theater work which put a premium on

communicativeness and relevance rather than “artistic effects.”

The cultural aftermath of the activism of the late 1960's is hard to measure but its impact may be mapped out. Among the established theater groups, already troubled by their use of English, there was gradual realization that only with the use of the language of the masses could they “capture” an audience.

The question of language for Filipino theater had arisen much earlier, but it was viewed then as a technical problem. Given the deteriorating quality of spoken English among Filipino students, the number of potential actors who could be cast in plays was severely limited by considerations of diction and intonation. When the intelligentsia in colleges and universities began to interpret, in terms of their social outlook, the nationalist ideas of Recto, they formulated these ideas as “a search for national identity.” The language problem theater people then took on a cultural dimension — where is Filipino theater when its content and its medium were of foreign origin? Cut off, however, by their education from the traditions of Philippine drama before English became a medium for dramatic performances, directors in search of “Filipino” material could only despair at the number and quality of English works they could use. This was the dilemma of Rolando S. Tinio when he turned his attention from “experimental theater” to the cultivation of “Filipino” theater. By then academic interest in the past of Philippine culture had begun to direct researchers to vernacular literature and drama. However, aside from attempts to document the history of Philippine theater, there was as yet very meager results in the area of compiling texts.

Tinio's alternative was to turn to translations of contemporary Western dramatic classics, such as *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, and *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller. In this, he was following the example of drama groups during the Japanese Occupation which rendered into Tagalog popular Western plays like *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Private Lives*, and *The Little Foxes*. More immediately, there was the experiment of Onofre Pagsanghan, who in the mid-60's adapted Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* into *Doon Po Sa Amin* (“In Our Native Town”), and readily found an appreciative audience for his “Filipino” interpretation of a very “American” work.

The impact of *Pahimakas sa Isang Ahente* (Death of a Salesman) went beyond its electrifying effect on the small audience that witnessed the performances at the GSP Auditorium. It jolted other theater practitioners into a realization not only of the necessity of replacing English with Pilipino but also of the exciting possibilities in the language shift. In the *Philippine Free Press*, the influential Quijano de Manila (Nick Joaquin) wrote

glowingly about Tinio's use of *kanto* language. And in *The Manila Times*, the equally influential drama reviewer Anthony Morli strongly objected to the colloquial and often profane Pilipino that was Tinio's equivalent of Miller's Brooklynese. Before 1972, Tinio was to translate five more plays — *Miss Julie*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Endgame*, and *Enemy of the People*.

In the meantime, Onofre Pagsanghan had given up on his previous kind of theater — staging high school productions of Shakespeare and other Western classics. He now turned his attention on the possibility of producing young playwrights for young audiences. Dulaang Sibol was born out of play production competitions among high school students at the Ateneo de Manila. The students wrote their own plays, mounted these at their own little theater, and competed with other students similarly assigned. During its early years, Dulaang Sibol was able to turn out two impressive beginning playwrights in the persons of Tony Perez and Paul Dumol. Perez received attention for his work in *Hoy Boyet* ("Hey, Boyet"), and Dumol in *Putting Timamanukin* ("the White Timananukin") and *Paglilitis ni Mang Serapio* ("The Trial of Mang Serapio"). Later, working under the guidance of Tinio, Perez was to come up with the long play *Anak ng Araw* ("The Sun's Child"). Dumol also wrote a long piece, *Pagkaawit ng Adarna* ("After the Adarna Bird Had Sung").

The Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) was founded during this period of feverish theater activity. Cecile Guidote had dreamed up a "national theater" which would embrace drama groups in schools all over the country. To realize such a dream, PETA set up an elaborate organizational system whereby actors, directors, playwrights and technical personnel would be trained. PETA was able to secure the use of Fort Santiago as venue for its productions, which made its plays accessible to a potential mass audience consisting of week-end park-goers.

Earlier, Repertory Philippines had been founded with the goal of fostering the growth of Philippine theater, with Zeneida Amador as its guiding spirit. Proof of its good intentions was the production that opened its first season. Tinio was asked to put on the first play, and he did a production of *Miss Julie* in Pilipino. But the venue of Repertory Philippines was on the top floor of the FGU Building on Ayala Avenue in Makati, and the Makati crowd to whom the FGU auditorium was accessible was not ready for familiar plays done in an unfamiliar language. In time, Repertory Philippines was going to give up on plays in Pilipino and concentrate on English-language productions of current hits in the U.S. and England.

In 1969, the Cultural Center of the Philippines was opened, and significantly, its inaugural presentation (*Ang Gintong Salakot* ["The Golden Salakot"] by Jose Lardizabal) was a musical show originally written in English but translated into Pilipino. Sometime later, and strangely enough, the Little Theater of the CCP was opened with an English-language production, Virginia Moreno's *The Onyx Wolf*.

Outside the gates of academe and plush walls of the CCP, the theater groups of nationalist youth organizations sought out their audiences in rallies, marches and demonstrations. Kamanyang Players, Kalinangang Anak-Pawis, Panday-Sinigg, Gintong Silahis, and Tanghalang Bayan — the names proclaimed political aims which their plays passionately conveyed to vast audiences in the language of the times — Pilipino.

The declaration of martial rule in 1972, in imposing political constraints on what was to be referred to as "Old Society," initially created disorientation among theater practitioners. In the months that followed the establishment of the "New Society," only a handful of shows were staged, among them being two musicals (*Tommy* and *West Side Story in Rock*, both staged at the CCP).

The period between 1965 and 1972 saw Philippine theater lurch toward social consciousness and militant nationalism under the free-wheeling climate of pre-martial law days. With the imposition of martial rule, decrees and letters of instructions pertaining to the use of media had an inhibiting effect on the activities of drama groups. During 1973, an observable trend was towards "safe" theater which consisted mostly of one-acters in Pilipino, and, when producers decided to go big, musicals. PETA, before 1972, had staged Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* in both Pilipino and English, Mari-lou Jacob's *Ai-dao* ("Taunting Call," about the Muslim struggle in the South), and Isaga-ni Cruz's *Halimaw* ("Monster" about the conflicting ideologies in Philippine society in the early seventies). In 1973, it was content to put on a play on family planning (*Itay, Kain Na Tayo*, "Father, Come, Let's Eat") commissioned by National Media Production Center, a Lenten play (*Kalbaryo*, "Calvary"), a repeat of its stage version of Amador Daguio's "Wedding Dance" (*Addongan*), and a revival of Jose Rizal's play, *Junto al Pasig*. Two sarsuwelas (Severino Reyes' *Ana Maria* and Alice Doria-Gamalilla's *Sa Lahat ng Oras* ("All the Time")), a rock opera (*The Survival of Saint Joan*), a Filipino opera (Lucino T. Sacramento's *Florante at Laura*), and a Broadway musical (*Gypsy*) — these were the big productions of 1973.

The Cultural Center of the Philippines was the chief venue for theatrical entertainment during this period, with both the main theater and the little theater busy. The CCP

art gallery provided space for dramatic performances at what was to be known as the End Room. Onofre Pagsanghan brought his *Dulaang Sibol* to give performances at the End Room. Tony Perez's *Alex Antiporda*, a one-act play about a basketball player unburdening himself to a student counselor, and Paul Dumol's existentialist version of the Adarna myth *Pagkaawit ng Adarna*, were both staged at the End Room.

A new drama group with the goal of doing research in theater history, reviving traditional dramas and revitalizing traditional forms, appeared in 1973. The founding of Babaylan Theater Company gave notice that the spirit of cultural nationalism remained alive under the new dispensation. For its first dramatic offering, Babaylan presented excerpts from a traditional *sinakulo*, along with a modernized version of the *sinakulo* in which Christ was symbolically portrayed as victim of a profit-oriented society.

Prior to 1972, in the spirit of the times, Repertory Philippines had put on two Brecht plays (*Mother Courage* and a Pilipino version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*). Early in 1974, Repertory Philippines resumed producing plays by mounting *The Sound of Music* (Zeneida Amador, director) at the CCP, followed shortly after by *Hello, Dolly!* (Z. Amador, director). The year saw two sarsuwela productions — Tinio staged a lavish revival of the classic sarsuwela *Ang Kiri* (The Flirtatious Girl); Daisy H. Avellana revived her much-acclaimed version of *Walang Sugat* ("Without any Wounds"). But it was above all the year of the Broadway musicals. The International School put on *Guys and Dolls*, Center Stage did *Mame* (V. Cassel, director), and the Manila Symphony Society presented *Man of La Mancha*.

Two new drama groups were organized and began offering a regular season of performances. At the CCP, it was *Samahan sa Dulo*, headed by Paul Dumol, which used the End Room for intimate productions of plays mostly originating from the repertoire of *Dulaang Sibol*. At the University of the Philippines, Behn Cervantes set up the U.P. Repertory Company as an amateur company dedicated to socially conscious Filipino plays.

Originally organized in 1973 as a laboratory for all the arts, *Kalinangan ng Lahi* in 1974 turned its attention to drama and coordinated a drama festival with schools from Greater Manila and surrounding cities as participants. During the festival, amateur campus groups each presented a Filipino play. Picking up where *Kalinangan ng Lahi* left off, a novel playwriting workshop and contest was jointly sponsored by the U. P. Repertory Company, the U. P. Writers Club and the Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature. A unique feature of the *Palihang Aurelio Tolentino*, as the workshop-contest was called, was the four-phase program which consisted of a workshop, a contest, subsidized

productions of prize-winning scripts, and publication of the revised plays.

Although the only original play of consequence during the year was Tinio's *May Katwiran ang Katwiran* ("Reason Has Its Reason"), a portable production that travelled from one school to another, as 1974 drew to a close, all indications pointed towards the cultivation of Philippine drama. Nevertheless, the main trend was in the direction of local versions of Broadway musicals.

The mainstream in the growth of Philippine theater began to take shape in 1975. The use of Pilipino in theater had been established in the 1960's by the works of Tinio, Pagsanghan and Guidote. When the new decade opened, there was no longer any question that the language of the masses had entrenched itself in the theater. Philippine theater, through language, had rediscovered the audience that loved the *sinakulo*, *komedya*, and *sarsuwela*. Because of the educational background of the leading theater practitioners (who were more at home with the use of English), the process of rediscovery was a fumbling affair. Translations and adaptations facilitated the transition, but it was the original activist drama groups that provided the opening for a breakthrough. Those scripts were often improvised and therefore necessarily crude and uneven, but they exerted a compelling power to which audiences responded passionately. It was obvious, therefore, that Pilipino as a medium alone was not enough to hold an audience; content was the determining factor in establishing rapport with an audience. More than a language that was widely understood by Filipinos, what Philippine theater needed, however, were original plays that would touch the hearts and hold the minds of audiences simply because they spoke about matters meaningful to the people whom the playwrights wanted to reach.

PETA, in 1975, snapped out of its disorientation and began to re-assert its identity as a moving force in the development of a truly national theater. When it put on Paul Dumol's *Kabesang Tales* ("Tales, the Headman," Felix Padilla, director), a powerful adaptation of the Tales episode from Rizal's *El Filibusterismo*, it left no doubt as to the direction it was going to pursue for the rest of the decade — to showcase the more substantial works of young playwrights who have a vital message to share with contemporary audiences.

The prize-winning Palihang Aurelio Tolentino plays were farmed out to various drama groups in Manila. Although the scripts were of uneven quality, they were significant as a body of full-length Pilipino plays, certainly representing a step away from the time in the past when Filipino playwrights, whether writing in English or Pilipino, turned out only one-acters. Of the ones that saw production in 1975, three are specially noteworthy for

the thrust in playwriting to which each pointed. *Sakada* ("Sugar Worker," B. Cervantes, director) by Mauro Avera dealt with the oppression of the sugar works in Negros; *Batilyo, Hindi Kami Susuko* ("We Won't Surrender," Al Garcia, director) by Manuel Pam-bid, called attention to the struggle of the batilyos of Malabon to form a union that would protect them against exploitative fishing magnates; *Anak ni Bonifacio* ("The Son of Bonifacio," Al Garcia, director) by Reuel Aguila gave voice to the anxieties and anger of the urban poor who are at the mercy of the powerful and wealthy whose solution to the squatter problem is forcible ejection. In 1975, such subject matter as was contained in the said plays would be regarded as quite daring, considering the restrictive guidelines for mass media then in force.

One significant event during the year was the first Manila visit of Sining Kambayoka, a drama group from the Mindanao State University. *Mga Kuwentong Maranaw* ("Maranaw stories"), directed by Sining Kambayoka's resident director Frank Rivera, was a theatrical eye-opener for both directors and young playwrights in the Manila area. Fusing ethnic music and dance, martial arts, recitation and drama, the production demonstrated how social comment in the theater can be enlightening and yet also vastly entertaining.

At the University of the Philippines, the Department of Speech sponsored Dulaang U. P. under the leadership of Antonio O. Mabesa. Like Teatro Pilipino, it began as a theater of translations mostly of Western drama. Its initial production was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* to a Philippine setting (*Pagkahaba-haba Man ng Prusisyon, sa Simbahan Din ang Tuloy*) by Mabesa.

Revivals of traditional dramatic forms had been a trend since 1973. In 1974, Babaylan presented three early one-act plays to illustrate the evolution of the short Tagalog play, in *Ay, Puso* ("Ah, My Heart!"). Severino Reyes, as a leading figure of the sar-suwela stage, was re-introduced to contemporary audiences through new versions of *Walang Sugat*, *Ana Maria*, and *Minda Mora* (Severino Montano, director). The sinakulo and related religious dramatic forms had become a part of the experimental background of theater practitioners interested in Philippine drama. Mainly through the efforts of Felicidad Mendoza, the komedya had received the attention of theater students and enthusiasts. In 1976, Babaylan proved once again that it was in the vanguard of revivals when it presented Anton Juan's production of Aurelio Tolentino's celebrated "seditious" play, *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas* ("Yesterday, today and Tomorrow"). Through innovations in the conception, costuming and stage design, the Tolentino play came off as an effective

comment on contemporary events and public personalities. *Sinakulo*, also directed by Juan, was a stylish re-working of Babaylan's 1973 *sinakulo*. It further buttressed Babaylan's leadership in the trend of revivals and revitalization of traditional drama.

A theater company envisioned as "a project for the development of the national language as language of our performing arts," Teatro Pilipino was born in 1976. As later developments would show, Teatro Pilipino identified itself principally with Western stage classics in translation, all of them rendered into Pilipino and directed by Tinio. Subsidized by the Department of Public Information and given a home in the Little Theater by the CCP, the company offered in its first season *Tiyo Vanya* (Uncle Vanya) by Anton Chekhov, *Paano Man ang Ibig* (As you Like It) by Shakespeare, *Ang Abaniko* (The Fan) by Carlo Goldoni, *Kawawang Marat* (The Promise) by Alexei Arbuzov, and two Filipino plays, (*Ana Maria*, a sarsuwela by Severino Reyes and Antonio Molina, and *Bayan-Bayanan* ("Imaginary Home Country"), a contemporary play by Bienvenido Noriega, Jr.

The staging of original plays gave valuable lessons to aspiring playwrights regarding craft, and to a growing audience regarding the relevance of drama to their lives. Two of the best Palihang Aurelio Tolentino prizewinners saw production this year: *Alipato* ("Flying Sparks," Jonas Sebastian, director) by Nonilon Queaño (which was to win in the first Palanca three-act play contest), and *Ang Walang Kamatayang Buhay ni Juan de la Cruz, Alias...* ("The Unending Tale of the Life of Juan dela Cruz, Alias...", Lito Tiongson, director) by Lito Tiongson. Queaño's play about slum-dwellers in transit between passiveness as victims and militancy as an organized community revealed an intense young playwright working in the realist vein. Tiongson's play was a sardonic historical drama showing the invincibility of the Filipino rebel who survives and prevails by changing guises from period to period. A contemporary sarsuwela on an ethnic theme, *Ang Bundok* ("The Mountain," Behn Cervantes, director) by Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio showed how social problems can be the meat of a song-and-dance drama without trivializing them. In *Dupluhang Bayan* ("The Peoples Duplo Joust," Gardy Labad, director) by Domingo Landicho, the arguments between the oppressed and the oppressor and among the oppressed themselves were cast in the form of a theatricalized *duplo*. *Bernardo Carpio* (Behn Cervantes, director) by Virgilio S. Almario and Tito Climaco, attempted to wed rock music and social comment, using the legend as narrative framework.

In 1977, the International Monetary Fund met in Manila, and that was the year of new five-star hotels and of the dinner theater. Plays had been staged in a few hotels before, but it was not until this year that dinner theater reached full flowering. Broadway

and West End plays, the latest comedy hits in New York and London, were the staple in this vogue, although such a grim drama as *A Streetcar Named Desire* (A. Mabesa, director) was also deemed proper for watching while dining. Since the audience for these performances was limited by virtue of high ticket prices, their impact was largely on the directors and actors who gained further professional exposure and extra income. Most of the performances were in English, but plays in Pilipino were also presented, notably *Boys in the Band* (Tony Espejo, director) which enjoyed a long successful run because its humor was considerably enhanced by the use of the fashionable argot of the Manila gay set. Another show that rated highly in terms of audience patronage was a lavish musical nostalgia trip into the history of the Manila Hotel entitled *Manila! Manila! As Time Goes By* (Leo Rialp, director).

Literary news became a theatrical event in 1977. National Artist Nick Joaquin finally qualified to be discussed as a playwright when he added three plays to his single play prior to 1976 (*Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*). It is significant, however, that two of the three were introduced to Manila audiences through Pilipino translations. The first to be staged was *Fathers and Sons* which Lino Brocka staged for PETA as *Mga Ama, Mga Anak* in 1977. *The Beatas* in Pilipino, directed by Behn Cervantes, was to wait until 1978. The only one performed in the original English version was *Tatarin*, which Lamberto Avellana would present also in 1978. The plays did not add to the already considerable reputation of Joaquin, but they might be seen as this writer's affirmation that drama indeed was the premier literary form of the period. Teatro Pilipino, in its 1977 season, presented *The Merchant of Venice*, G. B. Shaw's *St. Joan*, Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, and J. van Druten's *I am a Camera*. Its most significant production, however, was a Tinio version of a precious nineteenth-century komedya by Francisco Baltazar that had been presumed lost until a researcher discovered a copy of the script. The Teatro Pilipino production of *Orosman at Zafira* might very well be the first in the twentieth century.

Experimentation with native material was characteristic of the original plays in Pilipino. Rock music, popular singers, modern dance and ethnic folklore were combined in *Tales of the Manuvu* (Alice Reyes, director) by Bienvenido Lumbera, Nonong Pedero and Alice Reyes to create an entertainment piece described as a "rock opera ballet" that enjoyed wide audience patronage. *Ynangbayan* was created by Anton Juan Jr. out of excerpts from Amelia Lapeña Bonifacio's *Ang Bundok* and Aurelio Tolentino's *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas*, interweaving them with ethnic ritual and theatrical symbolism to cap-sulize the Filipino's struggle for freedom. When the production was entered in a drama

festival in France, it was warmly received by an international audience. In *Abadeja, ang Ating Sinderela* ("Abadeja, Our very Own Cinderella," A. L. Bonifacio, director), Amelia Lapeña Bonifacio re-told for children a Philippine version of the Cinderella story in terms of puppets executed and manipulated in the Asian tradition. PETA staged Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* as adapted to the culture of Filipino Muslims by Lito Tiongson and Franklin Osorio (*Ang Hatol ng Bilog na Guhit*), under the guidance of German director Fritz Bennewitz. Bennewitz's work finally allowed Manila audiences a chance to see Brecht as interpreted by a director who worked with the famous Berliner Ensemble. In what was widely regarded as the most sensational play of the year, Bonifacio Ilagan's *Pagsambang Bayan* ("The People's Worship," B. Cervantes, director) used the form of a religious service to heighten the audience's awareness of social realities in contemporary Philippines that either had been distorted or maliciously concealed from them. Further indication of lively interest of youth in theater was the appearance in 1977 of two new drama groups. Teatro Kabataan, under the tutelage of Joonee Gamboa and Adul de Leon, specialized in short plays presented *al fresco* in its garden theater. Teatro Obrero, with Magtanggol Cruz Hatol as resident director, started as a group subsidized by a trade union federation, with the mission of bringing theater to laborers and their families.

Fresh encouragement to Filipino playwrights came in 1978. Dulaang UP abandoned its practice of stacking its season with campus theater classics drawn from Western drama. Its 1978 season lined up new works by Filipino playwrights old, recent, and new: Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero, Isagani Cruz, Reuel Aguila, Al Santos, Bonifacio Ilagan and Rene O. Villanueva.

The CCP followed the example of Palihang Aurelio Tolentino in setting up Dulaang Gantimpala, an intimate theater run by Tony Espejo for inexpensive productions of plays that had been awarded in the CCP playwriting contest. The stand-outs came from newer names: Nonilon Queaño (*Ang Magsasaka* [The Farmer]), Soxy Topacio, director), Bonifacio Ilagan (*Katipunan*, T. Espejo, director), Jose Y. Dalisay Jr. (*Sugatang Lawin* [Wounded Hawk]), Pilar de Guzman, director).

From the evidence of original plays performed in 1978, there were signs that young playwrights were exploring non-conventional theater styles in an attempt to put across to a broad audience their insights into contemporary social realities. Reno O. Villanueva in *Burles* ("Burlesque" J. Sebastian, director) tried cinematic montage in commenting on Philippine society in the early 1970's through a story of decadence and lust in a burlesque house. Al Santos, in *Mayo A-Beinte-Uno, Atbp. Kabanata* ("May 21 and other Chapters,"

Joel Lamangan, director) employed the style of documentary theater to telescope the life and career of peasant and religious leader Valentin de los Santos. In *Sa Bundok ng Apo* ("In Mount Apo," A. Santos, director), the same playwright joined efforts with rock composer Jose Ayala Jr. to celebrate the heroic efforts of a mountain tribe to save their lands and traditions. Reuel Aguila's *In Dis Korner* ("In this Corner," A. Juan Jr., director), using the boxing ring as a metaphor about the struggle of the urban poor to climb out of the rut of poverty, borrowed narrative devices from film. The story of Josephine Bracken was deconstructed by Isagani Cruz in *Josephine* (A. Mabesa, director) in order to comment on history, the role of women in society, heroism and related themes. *Langit-Langitang Kumunoy* ("Heaven Is A Quicksand," A. V. Reyes, director) by Antonio Victor Reyes was a short story given a theatricalized dramatic reading to highlight the story of a peasant family and their slow progress toward liberation from institutionalized oppression.

Three translations attracted attention for various reasons. *Jesus Christ, Superstar* (Nestor U. Torre, director), the popular rock opera, was given a Pilipino translation that was both colloquial and singable. *A Streetear Named Desire*, titled in Pilipino as *Flores Para los Muertos*, showcased the acting talents of Laurice Gufflen, Chanda Romero, and Philip Salvador under the direction of Lino Brocka. *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (A. Juan, Jr., director), more militantly political than the communist playwright's other plays that had been produced locally, was rendered into Pilipino as *Santa Juana ng Kural* under the sponsorship of Kabataang Barangay.

Teatro Pilipino this year presented *The Miser*, *Menaechmi*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Camille* and *Romeo and Juliet*, all in Pilipino translation.

The year closed with the opening of yet another venue for original plays. The restored Metropolitan Theater was opened by a play with music by Rosauro de la Cruz entitled *Ang Munting Alamat* ("The Minor Legend," R. de la Cruz, director).

The start of the season of commissioned plays at the Metropolitan Theater gave the first half of 1979 three new musical plays: Al Santos and Rodolfo de Leon's *Juan Tamad vs. Paltos V* (J. Sebastian, director), Bienvenido Lumbera and Lucio San Pedro's *Ang Palabas Bukas* ("Showing Tomorrow," A. Mabesa, director) and Joey Papa and Ruben Federizon's *Batibot* (B. Cervantes, director). The Met policy made this institution the first to provide funds and a venue for the cultivation of musical drama beamed at popular audiences. Unfortunately, financing problems caused the abandonment of the project after the first season.

At the UP, the first play about life in a detention center was staged by Behn Cervantes. Authored by a former political prisoner, *Sa Panahon ni Cristy* ("In Cristy's Time," by Edgardo Maranan told the story of a poor fisherman and his wife and how incarceration drove them to desperation and madness.

Poverty was also the theme of *Juan Tambo* (Joel Lamangan, director) by Marilou Jacob, a passionate plea for slum children trapped by their environment to an existence scarred by starvation, deceit and petty crime. PETA's production was acclaimed by audiences that packed Raha Sulayman Theater at every performance, thus establishing a record for attendance at PETA performances.

Nick Joaquin's *Portrait* was onstage again, this time as *Larawan* (Lino Brocka, director), a translation by Alfred Yuson and Franklin Osorio. Notable performances by film stars Lolita Rodriguez, Charito Solis and Philip Salvador gave the show a reputation that sold out performances night after night.

The late Emman Lacaba was once at work on a historical play paying tribute to the city of Manila. Using his manuscripts and re-constructing finished fragments, Al Santos fashioned a play entitled *May-i, May-i* (G. Labad, director) which recreated the city of Manila at the coming of the Spanish colonizers.

In any country in touch with Western culture, a production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is always a big theater event. Shakespeare's masterpiece had been staged in the Philippines by Pagsanghan in the 1960's, who used an all-male cast of high school students. In its 1979 season, Manila audiences witnessed the first production in Pilipino of *Hamlet* in Pilipino, as directed by Tinio.

II

Theater history is more than a chronology of performances. It is also an evaluation of the forces that circumscribe all performances. But more than a calendar or an interpretation of events, history is the creative minds that made events happen. Of the creative minds that shaped Philippine theater from 1972 to 1979, the directors and the playwrights deserve more than a passing mention in the narration of historical moments.

Under an ideal set-up, director and playwright ought to grow together as craftsmen and artists. The distorting impact of certain historical forces, however, had made one outpace the other. After the heyday of the sarsuwela in the late 1920's, it happened that for an extended period, we had directors but no playwrights. There were people who wrote plays, to be certain, but because professional theater groups had to seek their audiences

in the countryside, and playhouses had been taken over by movies and vaudeville, there was no demand for a steady supply of new plays. Consequently, people who wrote plays had no opportunity to have their works tested through performances, and thus had no way of seeing what was right or wrong about their plays.

The dual role such director-playwrights as Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero and Severino Montano had to assume, highlights the sad history of playwriting among Filipinos after the 1920's. The writer himself had to mount his plays because if he did not, his plays might never get a chance to be staged. Or, the director himself had to write plays so that he would have the kind of local play he wanted to do. But not every director could write, and thus it happened that for a stretch of almost three decades, we had many Filipino directors but hardly anyone was directing Filipino plays.

When a Filipino director could not write, and there was no available local play to his liking, he turned to whatever play so he could practice his craft. The plays most readily at hand were plays from the United States, England, and Europe, which were available to him through the educational system. These plays were also ready-made for direction, having passed the test of performance in the countries of their origin.

A director used to working on foreign plays usually acquires an aesthetic sense dictated by these plays. He develops expectations that unfortunately the Filipino playwright almost always is unable to satisfy.

The fact that the art of playwriting by the close of the 1970's had been taken up by a fairly big number of young creative writers is perhaps the most significant development in the recent history of Philippine theater. This means that where there was none before, there was now a demand for Filipino plays. Audiences exposed to the intensive theater activity during the late 1960's developed an appetite for Philippine drama. They had come to expect that what they saw in the theater would mirror their concerns and their self-image, and only from plays written by Filipinos could their expectations be satisfied. Along with the audience, the directors began to look for plays that would be meaningful for audiences they would like to court. Thus did foreign drama lose its dominance in Philippine theater. Gone were the days when a director had to justify his decision to put on a Filipino play. Now one would have to explain why he had opted to put on a foreign play instead. But there were not enough plays from the past that would relate to contemporary audiences. Thus, the necessity to create new plays had arisen, and young playwrights tried to cope with the demand in spite of handicaps stemming from lack of formal training or previous theater experience.

When the new decade opened, there were about 24 authors who had had at least two plays performed in the years between 1972 and 1979. More than half of this number were below 30, which meant that their best writing years of these writers were still ahead of them. As it would turn out, creative writing in the Philippines in the 1980's more and more took the shape of drama.

Of the elder playwrights, Nick Joaquin was easily the most eminent by virtue of his title as National Artist. Two of his three new plays were based on short stories written before the 1960's. *Fathers and Sons* was a stage version of "Three Generations," a story about the psycho-spiritual barriers that separate fathers from their sons. *Tatarin* was an updated and expanded version of "Summer Solstice," which sets the struggle for dominance between male and female against the highly theatrical background of an ancient fertility rite that has persisted among Christian Filipinos in the twentieth century. *Beatas* was based on the actual history of a homegrown religious order for nuns founded in the eighteenth century. Its portrayal of the nuns' fortitude in the face of proscription and persecution gave it a level of meaning that appealed to audiences aware of the underground movement resisting the Marcos regime.

That *Fathers and Sons* and *Beatas* received their premiere performances in Pilipino translation was an indication that Joaquin was not likely to generate a second spring for Philippine drama in English.

Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio is undoubtedly the most prolific and also the most versatile among the elder authors. The prize-winning sarsuwela *Ang Bundok* marked a significant transition point in her career, for with this play she made the shift in medium from English to Pilipino. In the 1970's, she had turned more and more towards Asian theater for themes and especially techniques, as shown in her plays for children. *Abadeja, ang Ating Sinderela* took a Pilipino folktale and translated it to the stage using theater conventions drawn from Southeast Asian puppet and shadow plays. In *Sisa*, she experimented with the resources of Japanese Noh drama, collaborating with choreographer Cora Inigo, director Tony Mabesa and composer Lucrecia Kasilag to create high tragedy.

A screenplay writer who had also done directorial work, notably in *Lupang Hinirang*, Orlando Nadres is best known to theater audiences for his tragicomedy about a "closet queen," which could very well be one of the most popular plays during the decade. *Hanggang Dito na Lamang at Maraming Salamat* ("In Closing, Please Accept My Thanks") dug into the psychology of its central character and, combining humor and pathos, drew a touching character portrait of a homosexual who would like to "break

out" of his closet. *Paraisong Parisukat* ("Paradise Walled In") pursued the theme of "breaking out" on a wider social scale as it unfolds the inner turmoil of a female "model employee" longing for a fuller life away from the cubicle in the shoe store where she works. Other dimensions of Nadres' sensibility were revealed in two comedies, *Babae, Lalaki at Marami Pang Iba* ("Man, Woman, and Many Others") and *Ang Awit na Hindi Matapos-tapos* ("The Song that Goes On and On").

May Katwiran ang Katwiran had given Rolando S. Tinio maximum exposure as playwright. Written along the lines of Brecht's theory of the "learning play," the drama explores with ironic wit the dialectics of oppression and injustice as brought to play by an encounter between a seemingly dumb and passive peasant and an overbearing landlord. *A Life in the Slums* was an unusual play in English which pricks through black humor and absurdist portraiture the pretensions of the social elite to social consciousness.

Prizewinning fictionist, poet and actor Domingo Landicho turned playwright with *Unang Alay* (First Sacrifice), a short play on Bonifacio and the death of his child by Gregoria de Jesus. A longer work, *Dapithapon* ("Twilight"), starts with the trial of Bonifacio and concludes with his secret execution in Mount Buntis. *Toreng Garing* ("Ivory Tower") is an irreverent spoof of university intellectuals holding out in their ivory tower during the days of activism. Landicho's most ambitious work was *Dupluhang Bayan*, in which he made inventive use of the traditional *duplo* and *carillo* to dramatize class contradictions in Philippine society.

Another fictionist who turned to drama, Rogelio R. Sikat entered the theater by way of the Palanca one-act play contest. *Moses, Moses*, written before 1972, was an early example of social realism on the Philippine stage. About a schoolteacher who learns the hard way that under a corrupt system, justice is only for the powerful, *Moses, Moses* is a precursor of the protest plays of today's young playwrights. In *Saan Papunta ang Paruparo?* ("Where Is the Butterfly Going") Sikat depicted the plight of the Filipino writer whose pursuit of art is constantly waylaid by the reality of poverty.

Better known as a stage director, Onofre Pagsanghan qualified as a playwright by virtue of his skill and art as adaptor. *Sinta* ("Beloved") started as an adaptation of the American musical *The Fantastics*, but it evolved into an original creation, a play about the maturing of young love as told in verse and song that shimmer with nostalgia for the lost simple ways of earlier times. In *Kristo*, the director in Pagsanghan showed in his framing of a performance of the Lenten passion play within a story of barrio people taking roles in a community play.

Products of the nationalist ferment of the previous decade, the new playwrights of the 1970's reflected the questioning stance of the times when everything about the established order was being subjected to scrutiny. Their daring and irreverence were tempered by partisanship which affirmed service to the Filipino masses as the paramount expression of nationalism. Among them, "art for art's sake" was a mark of moral and political bankruptcy, and "relevance" was the supreme criterion of the worth of any creative piece.

The most prolific of the new playwrights seemed impelled by the pressure of personal experience of poverty to share with an audience his anger and bitterness over the brutalization of the poor by those who have wealth and power. Nonilon Queaño prefers to write in the realistic mode, but being also a poet and composer, he introduces into his grim stories lyrical moments which heighten rather than relieve the impact. *Alipato* portrayed poverty in the slums and pointed out that the poor if they must survive would have to stand together against men and institutions that threaten to wipe them off the face of the city. *Ang Magsasaka* looked into poverty and oppression in a Philippine barrio and suggested that it is the young who have learned to ask questions and fight back who carry the seeds of change.

Al Santo's *Mayo A-Beinte-Uno Atbp. Kabanata*, like Queaño's *Alipato*, was a Palanca-award winner. It was a telescoped biography of the leader of Lapiang Malaya and a compressed history of that messianic cult which was born among the peasantry. Santos had called it a documentary play, but the genre had been so modified as to allow for the use of expressionist staging devices to involve the audience in what was being presented on stage. *Dahil sa Kapiirasong Lupa* ("For a Piece of Land") was another documentary play, this time about the rise of the Hukbalahap movement in Central Luzon. Santos wrote a rock opera entitled *Sa Bundok ng Apo* with music by Jose Ayala Jr., about a Bagobo tribe defending its ancestral lands against land-grabbing lowlanders. *Juan Tamad vs. Paltos V* was a comic sarsuwela which contemporized the tale of Juan Tamad to counsel the audience against blind dependence on authority-figures and point them towards self-reliance in securing their liberation from poverty. Perhaps the most "theater-wise" among his contemporaries, Santos has employed a wide range of theatrical devices to draw audiences into an analysis of social issues as these were vivified on the stage.

Bonifacio Ilagan had his first play performed only in 1977, but he was quick to acquire a reputation as the most militant political playwright of the period. *Pagsambang Bayan* was a "conscienticizing" play using the order of church ritual to mark out the

Christian's progress towards involvement in the masses' struggle for a just and humane society. Ilagan went back to the history of the Katipunan in his prize-winning *Katipunan* (also titled *Sigaw ng Bayan*) to celebrate the Filipino people's anti-colonial struggle and to draw up parallels between the past and the present.

Anak ni Bonifacio was Reuel Aguila's first play, and it won him one of the Palihang Aurelio Tolentino prizes in 1975. The action of the play follows a young writer's progress from pure self-interest as an artist on the look-out for material for creative work, to commitment to an urban poor community's struggle against the warlord who coveted the land occupied by the community. Later Aguila came out with *In Dis Korner*. The play was ostensibly about game-fixing in the world of boxing, but significantly a lament for and a tribute to the down-trodden who learn to rise up in defiance of their oppressors.

Jose Y. Dalisay Jr. is recognized as one of the few substantial screenplay writers in the film industry. He was introduced to playgoers through the one-act play entitled *Madilim ang Gabi sa Laot* ("Dark Night at Mid-Sea"). *Sugatang Lawin*, a more ambitious work that won a CCP prize, set an inquiry into the meaning of heroism against the background of the Japanese Occupation. The three-act drama contained a number of character portraits that demonstrate Dalisay's understanding of human nature when this is subjected to the stresses of a social crisis.

Best-known as the precocious author of *Ang Paglilitis ni Mang Serapio* which he wrote when he was a senior in high school, Paul Dumol revealed a markedly existential outlook and a clear affinity with Theater of the Absurd. *Paglilitis* was a painful confrontation with the impossibility of hope as it makes us witness the degradation of one who refused to affirm the meaninglessness of existence. A later, longer and more mature work, *Kabesang Tales* wore a vaguely political color when viewed from the perspective of the present because it analyzed the structures of oppression within a colonial society. Dumol interpreted Rizal's *Tales* as a man who fights back when confronted by the Absurd, and this aligned him rather loosely with protest playwrights who view resistance less as a philosophical stance than a political imperative.

Two playwrights who maintained their distance from political concerns were Tony Perez and Bienvenido Noriega Jr. Perez, in *Hoy, Boyet* (Hey, Boyet), *Gabun* ("Earth"), *Alex Antiporda*, *Sierra Lakes*, and *Padre Frito, S. J.*, shows that his interest in presenting people to an audience is to probe into the dreams or traumas that shape an individual's personality. He was specially adept at showing through meandering monologues "quiet

lives of desperation,” and capturing the involutions of a young minds in the throes of understanding itself or perceiving the reality of others.

Bayan-Bayanan signalled Bienvenido Noriega Jr.’s entry into the theater scene. The play presented a “community” of Filipinos in a European city and how, as exiles, they become vulnerable to love or the lack of it. The varied character sketches indicated genuine interest in people on the author’s part and the quiet delineation of events pointed to the temper of a realist. Noriega attempted a more earthy subject in *Artista sa Palengke* (“Actor in the Public Market”), which touched on ambitions and dreams of escape that poverty breeds in a “star of the marketplace.”

There is a general tendency to identify any one of the better-known theater groups with the director who has left the stamp of his orientation, taste and preferences on the personality of the group. Repertory Philippines is Zeneida Amador, Teatro Pilipino is Rolando S. Tinio, U. P. Repertory Company is Behn Cervantes, Dulaang Sbbol is Onofre Pagsanghan, and PETA is Cecile Guidote.

To understand better the direction Philippine theater took in 1972-1979, directors might be grouped into two : those who started directing in the 1960’s, and those who started only within the period between 1972 and 1979. To the first group belong Tinio, Amador, Mabesa, Cervantes and Anton Juan Jr. To the latter, Frank Rivera, Gardy Labad, Joel Lamangan, Jonas Sebastian, and Tony Espejo.

Tinio in the 1960’s was *enfant terrible*, the young director with the creativity, skill, and, above all, the insouciant wit and flair to insist on his ideas on theater and have them at least respected if not necessarily received. At that time, the Ateneo Experimental Theater was the showcase of Tinio’s ideas and the base of his influence as director. Even before the advent of the 1970’s , Tinio had begun to move away from experimentalism toward nativist theater and translation. With the founding in 1976 of Teatro Pilipino, he devoted more and more time to the staging of Western theater classics in translation, gradually abdicating his position as leading influence in the theater scene that was increasingly laying emphasis on the staging of new Pilipino works. Tinio’s contribution during this period was the body of translated Western plays that drama groups in the future are bound to turn to when they need to enrich their repertoire of mainly original Pilipino works with foreign dramas from which playwrights and other students of the theater can learn more about their craft. In the course of four seasons, Tinio had translated and directed four Sheakspearean plays (*As You Like It*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*), two Greek tragedies (*Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*), a Roman com-

edy (*Menaechmi*), a contemporary Soviet play (*The Promise*), two Chekhov dramas (*Uncle Vanya* and *The Seagull*), one Shaw (*Saint Joan*), and one Moliere (*The Miser*).

The work of Zeneida Amador as director had consistently been in making available to local theatergoers the current and fairly recent hits in New York and London. Although in the late 1960's, she tried her hand at directing social drama (*Mother Courage* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the latter in Pilipino translation), Amador had by and large kept aloof from "high art" or "social relevance." More than any other director working on plays written in English, she had perfected the art of staging Western plays with a Filipino cast. Her achievement as director was especially marked by professional polish in staging big musicals like *The Sound of Music*, *Hello, Dolly*, *The King and I*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Chorus Line*.

Behn Cervantes in the past had worked as movie reviewer, film director and actor, but he was better identified as a director who tested the boundaries of social comment under the "New Society." As founder and resident director of U. P. Repertory Company, he set the pace for the development in the 1970's of the stage as a forum for the elucidation of national issues. Cervantes' productions insisted that the audience take a stand, one way or the other, on such topics as neocolonial exploitation (*Ang Bundok*), maladministration of justice (*Sa Panahon ni Cristy*), capitalist oppression of workers and peasants (*Sakada* and *Dahil sa Kapirasong Lupa*), reformism and revolutionary change (*Pagsambang Bayan*). He has also experimented with various production genres: historical pageant (*Sigaw ng Bayan*), historical tragedy (*Dapithapon*), polemical period drama (*Beatas*), sarsuwela (*Paglipas ng Dilim*), children's theater (*Batibot*), Broadway musical (*Godspell*), and poetic drama (*The Heart of Emptiness Is Black*).

Youngest of the senior directors was Anton Juan Jr., a restless experimenter reminiscent of Tinio in the 1960's. In his choice of material, he showed a preference for dramas with a certain degree of social reverberation. When his experiments succeeded, his productions stood out for innovative staging. Notable among his productions had been revivals of Tolentino's *Kahapon*, *Ngayon at Bukas* and *Bagong Cristo*; the revised and augmented version of Babaylan's 1974 *sinakulo*; *Santa Juana ng Kural* and *In Dis Korner*. *Ynangbayan* was well-received when it was entered at the Nancy theatre festival in France.

Founder of Dulaang U. P., Director in Residence at U. P., and theatre director of the Metropolitan Theater, Tony Mabesa was one of the busiest directors in 1972-79. His experience with all types of plays and all manner of staging conditions had given him adap-

tability and versatility and endowed his theatre work with much popular appeal. The stylistic range of his productions might be gauged from the widely differing approaches evident in *Pagkahaba-haba Man ng Prusisyon...*, which was stylishly campy; *Ang Pabilog na Guhit ng Tisa*, which was epic in the Brechtian manner; *Toreng Daring*, which was broad and spoofy; and *The Staircase*, which was intimate and realistic.

The tautness and intensity of *Asyenda Animal* and the barbed buffoonery of *Juan Tamad vs. Paltos V* represented the two aspects of Sebastian's talent as director. Sebastian handled both high drama and broad comedy with polish and control. In *Alipato*, he demonstrated that as director of realistic drama, he had a feel for the authentic detail that reveals character and underscores meaning.

Tony Espejo made a big splash as dinner-theatre director with his production of *Boys in the Band* in Pilipino. His success as director of entertainments was an indication of his audience-oriented sensibility. Moving spirit behind CCP's Dulaang Gantimpala, he directed an intimate production of *Katipunan*, a prizewinning play which gave him a chance to demonstrate that he could do serious drama for the right audience.

Among younger directors, working with PETA involved the assimilation of the concept of total theatre which exploits of drama, dance, ethnic music, martial arts and improvised sound effects to create a theatrical atmosphere that would envelope an audience. Frank Rivera, Gardy Labad and Joel Lamangan absorbed this concept, and in their works may be perceived what is perhaps best described as "the PETA style," an identifying mark that founder Cecile Guidote cultivated when she was running the organization in the late 1960's and which had been expanded by the practice of young directors who came under the Guidote influence.

Frank Rivera worked with a drama group based in Mindanao State University in Marawi City, but his troupe's Manila performances enhanced his reputation as director in the theatre scene in Manila. The creativity and resourcefulness evident in the productions of Sining Kambayoka would not be so remarkable in a Manila stage were these qualities not associated with social consciousness immediately pertaining to the culture and concerns of the Muslim South. *Mga Kuwentong Maranaw* was definitely ethnic in concept and production design, but the production avoided being merely exotic because Rivera expertly subordinated theatrical effects to the social themes that SK would like to communicate. In *Halik sa Kampilan* ("Kiss upon the Knife"), Rivera took a defective script and molded it into a compelling visual and auditory celebration of the Muslim struggle for freedom.

Although Gardy Labad was closely identified with the elaboration of "the PETA style," this young director cannot be pigeon-holed as a theatre artist. He had directed in the realistic mode a passionately partisan presentation of the plight of the homeless urban poor in *Higaang Marmol*. His restraint and good taste kept the melodrama in *Hanggang Dito na Lamang at Maraming Salamat* under control in order to underscore the tragicomic mood of Nadres' play. *Dupluhang Bayan* and *May-i* demonstrated his grasp of total theatre which was employed to deepen the social consciousness of his audience.

A young director who attached himself to PETA ran the risk of losing his identity under the shadow of a pervasive style. Joel Lamangan, in *Mayo A-Beinte-Uno Atbp. Kabanata*, had left his signature as director whose tight pacing and carefully composed stage pictures always underlined the playwright's intentions. In *Juan Tambo*, Lamangan effectively interwove the personal and the social strands of the narrative through an interplay of realistic acting and stylized crowd scenes.

The playwrights and directors mentioned above did not make up the totality of theatre life in 1972-1979. They were fairly representative, however, of the motive forces that provided the period with plays and productions which pointed out two directions that theatre activity was to take in the 1980's : (1) towards increasing emphasis on the production of original Pilipino plays and firmer grasp and control of the art and craft of playwriting, and (2) towards a production style distinctly Filipino in its fusion of traditional forms with imported styles and techniques drawn from the theatres of Asia and Europe.

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